

When Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Pasuya Yao (姚國建) was competing to win the party's nomination for Taipei mayor, he pledged that he would resign as legislator, accept no other post and quit politics forever if he came in third in the election.

He was confident that he would not come in third in the Nov. 24 local elections and that confidence was not completely groundless.

Looking back at Taipei's mayoral elections, the DPP suffered its greatest defeat in 2002, when its candidate Lee Ying-yuan (李英淵) obtained 35.89 percent of the vote.

The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) suffered its biggest defeat in 2014, when its candidate Sean Lien (連戰) only won 40.82 percent of the vote, the pan-blue camp's basic supporter base in the city.

The KMT's credibility is bankrupt, its assets have been frozen and its Taipei mayoral candidate, Ting Shou-chung (丁守中), failed to be elected in the latest legislative election. How will he defend the blue camp in Taipei? No matter how you slice it, Yao cannot come in third.

LAGGING SUPPORT

The odd thing is that Yao's support is lagging far behind Ting and Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲). However, opinion polls are one thing and election results are another, as the case of then-DPP candidate Yu Shyi-kun's (俞士凱) bid for the New Taipei City mayorship in 2014 shows: He almost won, despite lagging behind in the polls.

The conclusion is that as long as the DPP and the KMT can hold on to their supporters, the independent Ko has no chance and Yao will not end up in third place.

SWING VOTERS

Why then is Ko maintaining his momentum? The reason is obvious: Ting and Yao are too weak, and the two parties are losing momentum, giving Ko a golden opportunity.

First there is the issue of middle-of-the-road voters. Their growing number can erode the KMT's and DPP's support bases and benefit Ko, who claims to be neither blue nor green.

As Ko has lost the DPP's endorsement, attacking the pan-blue and pan-green camps and their ideologies are his best campaign strategy. Ko's momentum is probably a result of his taking advantage of the increasing number of swing voters, rather than being a result of his charisma.

Swing voters have always existed and they can be manipulated, but why are there so many of them in this mayoral election? It is clearly not because of Ko's skills.

As the DPP repeatedly distances itself from "green values" and no longer insists on "green ideals," it is losing support as older generations are turning away from it and younger generations are left unimpressed.

Not even Ko's statement that "the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are family" seems to have harmed his campaign, but it is not very strange that young voters who did not live through the painful authoritarian rule would move toward the middle.

CYBERARMY

Second, there is the issue of the mythical netizens. According to reliable sources, Ko has spent all of his campaign funds on building a cyberarmy.

Yao's crisis today will be Tsai's tomorrow

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Although the momentum of a cyberarmy could help boost his support rating, the question is whether that support could be converted to votes in an election. That is a point worth taking a closer look at as we move into this new era.

More seriously, Yao's crisis today is President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) crisis tomorrow. The issue of whether the DPP will win the November elections depends on Tsai, not the voters.

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